

Tsunami Response in Sri Lanka
Trip Report January 5-29, 2005
By Bill Laspina

Purpose of Trip: Humanitarian Aid Relief to victims of the South and Southeast Asia Earthquake and Tsunami.

Location: Colombo and various locations in Sri Lanka

Position: Logistics Officer on Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)

Introduction: On December 26, 2004 at 6:58 a.m. local time, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake occurred off the west coast of Northern Sumatra, Indonesia. The earthquake had a depth of 10 km and triggered massive tsunamis that affected countries throughout South and Southeast Asia.

As part of the U. S. government response to this disaster the deployment of a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) was initiated. The DART consisted of USAID, Fairfax County Search & Rescue, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Disaster Assistance Support Program (FS/BML International Programs) personnel and other USG agencies.



Additional support was made available from all branches of U.S. Military. During the operational period of December 28 – January 27, 13,435 U.S. Military personnel were involved in providing relief support to the affected region.



Duties: Assisted with the management of the Disaster Response Team (DART) assigned to Colombo, Sri Lanka. Responsible for the coordination of logistics functions for humanitarian aid to tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. Coordinated with the U.S. Embassy, U S Military and Sri Lanka government officials for movement of U.S.G and NGO's commodities and personnel to and within Sri Lanka.

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Summary: Latest figures from this disaster place the death toll at 166,137, missing at 128,353 and the internally displaced persons (IDP) at 1,232,334. The undertaking of this operation was a times unbelievable. The task of getting local, foreign, military, civilian, UN and Non Government agencies to coordinate and work as a team was difficult.

Even with these difficulties, figures show that the U.S. Military moved more than 1.2 million pounds of relief commodities and at this time USAID/OFDA figures show more than 2,500 rolls of plastic sheeting, 1,000 blankets, 8 – 10,000 litter water bladders, 47,000 10-liter water containers, 16,000 hygiene kits, 20,000 kitchen sets and 20,000 mosquito nets have been dispatched to the region.

Accounting for all of this and UN, NGO and other world organizations a massive amount of commodities and aid has been sent to the region in a very short period of time.



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